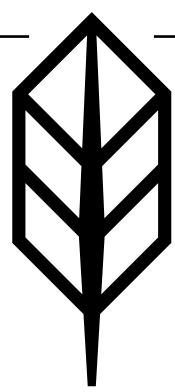


The Preservation Society of Asheville and Buncombe County (PSABC) was formed in 1976, with interest in preservation sparked by observance of the US Bicentennial, and in response to threats to local buildings and sites posed by neglect, insensitive alteration, and large-scale transportation projects. Disinvestment in downtown, plans for the open cut through Beaucatcher Mountain, and a proposal to turn Montford Avenue into a through street connecting to U.S.19-23 spurred formation of the volunteer

group, which quickly incorporated and initiated work as a community non-profit. The Society advocated to City Council and County Commission to establish a joint city-county local landmark and historic district commission, to designate Montford as a local historic district, and to provide matching funds for local survey of historic buildings and sites. These actions made possible the historic designation of numerous sites and districts, and contributed to downtown revitalization and preservation of historic places county-wide.

THANK YOU FOR PRESERVING WITH US



Pebbledash

PRESERVATION
SOCIETY OF
ASHEVILLE
AND BUNCOMBE CO.

A PUBLICATION OF THE PRESERVATION SOCIETY OF ASHEVILLE AND BUNCOMBE COUNTY

SPRING 2026

PSABC CELEBRATES 50 YEARS



On a warm day in May of 1976, around 35 people gathered in the Arts Journal office at 324 Charlotte Street. They shared one common goal: saving at-risk historic places in Asheville and Buncombe County. Fifty years later, that small office building is home to the organization formed that day—the Preservation Society of Asheville and Buncombe County.

As we reflect on this fifty-year legacy, we are revisiting the history of the organization, with a focus on documenting the stories of those who built PSABC from the ground up. Part of this effort is an oral history project to record the stories of members who have played crucial roles over the years, from original Board members to longtime friends and volunteers.

We've discovered some true gems—for example, architect Robert Griffin recalled that when Helen's Bridge was under threat, the project team proved its structural stability by building two dams and pouring hundreds of gallons of water into a plastic vessel to see if it would hold!

We will debut a new project at our annual meeting to celebrate this special anniversary! At the June meeting, we will re-introduce our history in a website that includes a comprehensive timeline of the organization, while weaving in the incredible stories that our members have shared. From their words, we will bring to life all of the details that make PSABC the incredible institution that it is today. ☘

Be sure to sign up for our newsletters to hear first when these projects are unveiled.

psabc.org/join-our-email-list

SAVE THE DATE 50TH Anniversary Party and Annual Meeting will be held on June 25 at Circa 29 below the S&W Cafeteria



PSABC Awarded \$75,000 from the 1772 Foundation



In March, the 1772 Foundation, in partnership with the National Preservation Partners Network (NPPN), announced that the Preservation Society of Asheville and Buncombe County would receive \$75,000 for our Historic Properties Redevelopment Program (HPRP). Nine nonprofit preservation organizations across the United States were selected to receive funding totaling \$498,500 to support the rehabilitation, stabilization, and stewardship of historic properties in their communities.

Historic Properties Redevelopment Programs — also known as revolving funds — are proactive real estate strategies that preserve historic buildings through purchase/resale, rehabilitation, easements, tax credits, loans, and other innovative approaches. Nonprofit preservation groups using these strategies have successfully repurposed thousands of buildings nationwide, tackling challenges including economic revitalization, affordable housing, neighborhood development, and climate

change. “The 1772 Foundation is proud to support organizations that are making a tangible difference in their communities by saving irreplaceable historic places,” said Ethiel Garlington, executive director for the Foundation. “These revolving fund programs are proven models for sustainable preservation, and this year’s recipients represent the breadth and creativity of the field.”

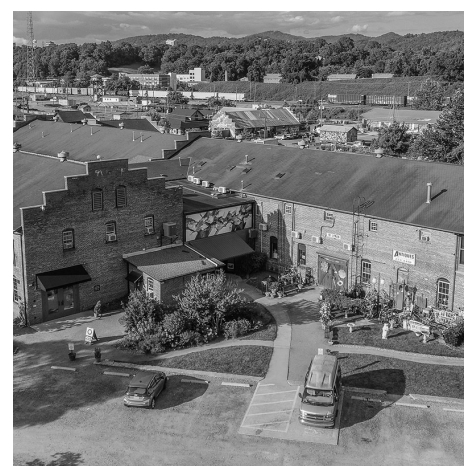
PSABC will add grant funds to its existing resources to support an ongoing adaptive reuse project at Cappadocia Church and future purchases and rehabilitations of endangered historic properties. Rising real estate market values, increasing construction costs, and the devastating impact of Hurricane Helene have made preservation projects increasingly expensive in the region, making grant support critical to meeting the community’s preservation needs. We are grateful to the 1772 Foundation and the National Preservation Partners Network for their support! ☘

50 YEARS 50 EASEMENTS!

Our preservation easement program began in 1981 with protections placed on the Gudger House in Montford. In the years since, the program has grown exponentially to include private homes, businesses, churches, community centers, and hotels. Each of these properties is protected from demolition in perpetuity. Staff ensures continued stewardship of these properties through annual monitoring and technical support.

Riverview Station River Arts District, Asheville

We are excited to announce that we accepted the donation of a preservation easement on Riverview Station at 191 Lyman Street in December. This group of historic buildings was constructed in the 1910s as the Leather Warehouse, the Scouring and Rolling House, and the Currying Shop of the Hans Rees' Sons Tannery, the first tannery in Asheville. The two-story brick industrial buildings with gable roofs and stepped parapets were used for the drying, finishing, and storing of leather goods in the first half of the twentieth century. We are thrilled that these beautiful buildings are now permanently protected!



32 Grail Street East End/Valley Street Neighborhood, Asheville

In January, PSABC closed on the sale of the 32 Grail Street house to the Asheville-Buncombe Community Land Trust. This has been an effort years in the making, and marks a timely and truly special milestone—32 Grail is officially the 50th easement property recorded in our organization’s history!

We would like to thank the Asheville-Buncombe Community Land Trust for their partnership on this project, the City of Asheville for making this sale possible, and the East End/Valley Street Neighborhood Association for their dedicated support throughout the whole process! We are so proud that

this beautiful home is now permanently protected and will remain deeply affordable for 99+ years. ☘



© Ryan Theede

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

We Persevere

At our first meeting back in May of 1976, Betty Lawrence (right) arrived a little late and perched on the big window sill at the front of the building. And thus began Betty’s unbroken dedication to historic preservation in our community.

In May of 2026, we renamed our award for individuals who have made a deep and meaningful impact on preservation in Asheville and Buncombe County the Betty Tenn Lawrence Award for Preservation Excellence.

Betty knows the ups and downs of preservation work better than anyone. Her many successes with PSABC include the formation of the Historic Resource Commission, preservation of the Gudger House, the Manor and the E. W. Grove Office, and the formation and ongoing growth of our easement program.

Her longevity in preservation means she also knows better than anyone the pain of the hard-fought losses: Coleman House, demolished in the middle of the night; sites like Richmond Hill and the Cotton Mill which should have been on our list of successes but were tragically lost to fire; thirteen houses along the Charlotte Street corridor demolished for nothing!

But as she says, we persevere. She has told me that more times than I can count and she is always right.

Hearing stories of the old days, I’m pretty sure they had some fun while they were doing it! When asked about saving the Manor, Betty recounted the story of visiting with the then-owner of the property with Robert Griffin: “Robert and I went up there and [the owner] liked rye whiskey, so we had a bottle of rye whiskey, and we sat there and talked to him for several hours and he sold it to us [...] If we could think of something to do to save [a building], we did it [...] And getting him drunk on rye whiskey was one of those things we decided we could do.”

Betty’s spirit and tenacity is an inspiration for everyone who has worked with her and has shaped PSABC for half a century. As she said, “We’ve never shied away from something that seemed hard. We didn’t. And we haven’t. And I hope we never do.”

Recently our founding Board President Bob Orr shared this about Betty: “Betty was the quintessential flower child of the '70s. [She] looked like she was blown out of a cannon, driving a beat-up old Volkswagen bus, a heart as big as Pisgah Mountain, into all sorts of causes. [She was] working at the library and one day she says, ‘I think I want to go to law school.’ I’m thinking, ‘Okay, well, yeah, that’s great, Betty.’ And so she takes the LSATs, and she makes a perfect score, and all of a sudden, everybody across the country is offering her scholarships. She goes to Duke Law School, does really well, moves to New York, puts on a blue suit, practices in some big firm making a boatload of money, cashes out, sells everything, moves back to Asheville, buys the old big, historic house, goes right back to driving the beat-up Volkswagen and looking like she’s blown out of the cannon. I mean, you know, it’s just a wonderful story, and it’s been a continuing force for the Preservation Society.”

A heart as big as Pisgah Mountain. That is certainly the Betty we all know and love. Thank you to Betty for your years of dedication to our mission and on a personal note, for bringing me down to earth when I’m worried about something I can’t change and encouraging me when I’m on the right track. Betty is the backbone of PSABC and we want her to know how much she continues to inspire us to work hard and do better for this place we all love so much.

Sincerely,

Jessie

Jessie Landl, Executive Director

Please consider a donation in honor of Betty today & help carry us into our next 50 years!



Photo: John Toms

“We’ve never shied away from something that seemed hard. We didn’t. And we haven’t. And I hope we never do.”

Betty Lawrence

PSABC Board & Staff

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Elisabeth Brown

DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT
Jamie Moody

COMMUNICATION, EDUCATION
AND OUTREACH COORDINATOR
Catherine Amos

OFFICE MANAGER
Amy Hornaday

PRESERVATION MASCOT
Lillian



Meet Elisabeth: Our Historic Preservation Specialist



Elisabeth Brown joined the Preservation Society of Asheville and Buncombe County last October as our Historic Preservation Specialist. Elisabeth graduated from the University of Alabama at Birmingham in her hometown with both a Bachelor of Arts and a Master of Arts in History in 2023. Last spring, she earned a Master of Science in Preservation Practices from Roger Williams University in Bristol, Rhode Island, where she was awarded her degree program’s Academic Excellence Award.

As a student, Elisabeth garnered professional experience through work with the Sloss Furnaces National Historic Landmark in Birmingham, the Department of Planning and Development in Raleigh, the Providence Preservation Society in Rhode Island, and the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation in Montpelier. In her current role, she monitors the fifty easements held by PSABC and provides free technical support to the owners of historic properties across the county.

Elisabeth enjoys moviegoing, concertgoing, beachgoing, and “You Ain’t Goin’ Nowhere” by Bob Dylan. She is thrilled to be in Asheville working in a role that involves such direct engagement with Buncombe County’s past and such meaningful investment in its future.

UPCOMING PSABC EVENTS

JUNE 25TH

Annual Meeting & 50TH Anniversary Celebration

AUGUST 20TH

Hidden in Plain Sight
WITH WILL HORNADAY

SEPTEMBER 26TH

Time Traveling Gala

OCTOBER 15TH

An Evening with Carl Elefante

NOVEMBER 12TH

The Legacy of Bert King
WITH HEATH TOWSON

DECEMBER 10TH

Holiday Party

ASK A PRESERVATIONIST

Q: My house was built in 1945. Do I qualify for historic tax credits?

A: You just might!

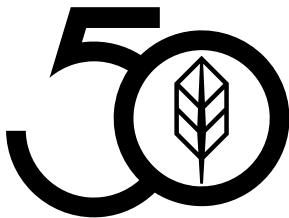
Federal and state income tax credits support owners of historic properties working to rehabilitate their residential or commercial buildings. The programs allow property owners to claim a tax credit equal to a percentage of the rehabilitation project’s cost.

Through North Carolina state tax credit programs, homeowners may receive a 15% state tax credit for the qualified rehabilitation of owner-occupied residential properties or a 15-25% state tax credit for the qualified rehabilitation of income-producing properties. Owners may also claim an additional 20% federal tax credit for the qualified rehabilitation of income-producing properties. These programs are administered by the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office (HPO) in partnership with the National Park Service.

In order to determine if your house is eligible, you’ll want to see if it’s listed on the National Register of Historic Places—either individually or as a contributing building within a district. You can check a building’s National Register status using HPOWEB, an online mapping service provided by the North Carolina HPO. Buildings on the National Register must be at least fifty years old, so it’s worth checking to see if your mid-century building is listed! Inclusion on the National Register is the first step in qualifying for historic rehabilitation tax credits. The two other factors that determine whether your house is a candidate are the cost of the rehabilitation project and the appropriateness of the work performed. To learn about eligible rehabilitation expenses, cost thresholds, the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation and the tax credit application process, you can visit hpo.nc.gov.

Need help navigating this? We’re here to help! Give us a call at 828-254-2343.

Thank You for Preserving With us!



Is your home 50 years or older? So are we!
Learn more & become a member at PSABC.org



2026 Griffin Award Winners

ADAPTIVE REUSE

387 Haywood Road

BCA Architecture and Design
CLAVIGER, LLC
Haley Jelinek & Kathryn Adams – Nice Time Glass
Haunt by spoon + hook
Kayla Councell & Tina Councell – Iron Maiden Studios
Victor Hernandez – Verde Woodworks
Wesley Davis – Twin Brothers Contractor
Woodland Tattoo & Talismans
Zack Noble – Zack Noble Metalworks

In 1937, this building opened as White's Service Modern Station, serving Asheville's growing population of motorists. The building continued to offer automotive services for many years before becoming vacant in the 2000s. In 2023, the building was purchased by new owners who envisioned the historic garage as a space for local makers. In order to adapt the building, the project team reconfigured interior spaces to host multiple tenants while maintaining the garage's historic features. They preserved the building's distinct roofline, exterior and interior brick walls, and many of the building's original openings, including the circular gable windows and the garage bays. Their sensitive interventions allow natural light to fill the new studios, galleries, and shops.

ADAPTIVE REUSE

Ananda Hair Studio North, 308 Merrimon Avenue

Balken Roofing
Bob Judy – Zep Design
Charlie Gross
Chester Ervin & Zack Crowder – C. H. Ervin Electric
Chuck Gross
Dana McKeever
David Humphrey – Square Peg Construction
Eddie Cruz – Perfection Painting
Harrison Hopkins
Javier Trejo
Jeremy Russell
Larry Hopkins
Mac McKeever
Maurico Cruz
Mike Young – B&H Metal
Rudy Perez – R&J Concrete
Simone Wilson – Pleasant Hugh Studios
Tucker Gross
Victor Chiarizia

In 1917, parishioners gathered to lay the cornerstone for Asheville's First Congregational United Church of Christ. Designed by architect William Henry Lord, the temple-fronted brick church with a double-height portico and classical ornamentation also served as a cultural center and a retail shop before Larry Hopkins set out to convert the building into a hair salon. The team at Ananda Hair Studio sought to keep the former sanctuary as open as possible—sixteen stylist stations were arranged symmetrically to honor the building's classical design features and take advantage of the natural light admitted by the large windows. Existing interior wood paneling was preserved, and a custom metal planter was designed to bring the mezzanine level to code.

ADAPTIVE REUSE

Flat Iron Hotel, 20 Battery Park Avenue

Adapt Public Relations
Beverly-Grant Contractors
Civil Design Concepts
Ed Holmes & Associates
Flat Iron Preservation Group, LLC
Foss & Company
Garage Cap
Goldman Sachs
Hilderbran & Hitchcock
Impact Development Management
Indigo Road Hospitality Group
JPW Development
MacRostie Historic Advisors/Ryan, LLC
Mey & Co. Interior Design
Roberts & Stevens
Rowhouse Architects
Whiting Turner

Completed in 1926, this nine-story former office building was one of Asheville's first skyscrapers. Designed by architect Albert C. Wirth, the Flatiron Building served as a retail and office complex for over ninety years. The brick and limestone building's distinctive shape and classical ornamentation made the Flatiron one of the city's most recognizable landmarks. In 2021, Philip Woolcott and the Flatiron Preservation Group set out to convert the office building into a boutique hotel. Necessary work included the remediation of asbestos throughout the building, the installation of all new mechanical systems, and the addition of an accessible elevator. Over the course of the project, all the building's significant features were repaired or preserved, including the original terrazzo floors, marble wainscoting, pink marble staircase, and historic elevator cabs. Additionally, the historic exterior elements including the steel-framed windows and copper-trimmed storefronts were all retained.

ADAPTIVE REUSE

Rowan Coffee West, 785 Haywood Road

BCA Architecture and Design
Bow Smith
Brushcan Murals
Crossroads Upholstery
Dennis Smith – Flux Glass
Drom Construction
Jessi Lee Cord
Jessi Lee Interior Design
Mike Zinsmeister

Built in 1929, this one-story brick building in West Asheville has long been associated with automotive services. For many years, the property housed an auto repair shop, and a freestanding filling station occupied the lot in front of the building.



387 Haywood Road



Rowan Coffee West



Biltmore Crossing



Old Europe Pastries



W. Asheville History Museum



Lou Pollock Memorial Park



Ananda Hair Studio North



Flat Iron Hotel



32 Grail Street



Mosaic Realty Office



Raoulwood Stable Cottage



Tunnel Studios



UpMarket Gallery



Come Hell or High Water



Urban Renewal Impact: the Movie



Montreat Stewards

Bow Smith was confident that the former garage would be conducive to his vision for a new Rowan Coffee location. Adapting the property to a café involved navigating building code and zoning requirements and updating site infrastructure, an undertaking that included bringing water service to the building for the first time. To preserve the historic integrity of the property, original windows were retained and interior shelving was carefully designed around them. The windows' grid motif also inspired the tile and textile selections.

REHABILITATION

32 Grail Street

Builtwright Construction Co.
DLV Roofing Systems
Duffmade
Franconcrete
Living Stone Masonry
Load-Bearing Builders LLC
Reems Creek Construction and Restoration
The Grove Cabinet Gallery of Asheville

This 1910 single family home in the East End/Valley Street neighborhood was slated for demolition when PSABC purchased it in early 2022. By this point, a section of the rear wall had detached from the structure, the foundations of all three porches were failing, and the chimneys seemed to be floating on the roof. John Olup of Reems Creek Construction and Restoration was able to see past the old carpet and dilapidated aluminum siding, and spent the next two years working to bring the house back to life. His team dug out the soil beneath the basement by hand and rebuilt the floor system. Electric, plumbing and HVAC systems were all upgraded. New drywall was hung, the porches and chimneys were rebuilt, and a new roof went on. Luckily, the original siding and hardwood floors had been protected by the aluminum and carpet, and have been beautifully refurbished.

REHABILITATION

Biltmore Crossing, 28-35 Hendersonville Road

137 Fire and Security
Advanced Commercial Refrigeration
Anna Krauss
Anthony Cerrato
Ashley Mobile Electric
B&H Sheet Metal
Blue Ridge Restaurant Equipment
Brejack Tile
Companas Properties

David Ross
DIBOCO
Falcon Development of NC
NCPD
No Mold WNC
Old Tree Construction
Rhythm Design
Robinson Painting Company
True Edge Drywall
USI Allied
WNC Roofing

Built by Joseph C. Cole in 1923, this two-story building housed the Biltmore Hardware Company for nearly seventy years. With its arched central door opening, brick parapet, and historic storefronts, 28-35 Hendersonville Road is a commercial architectural landmark in Biltmore Village.

During Hurricane Helene, the building was inundated with eleven feet of water. The entire first floor interior and many exterior features had to be completely rebuilt. The project team worked hard to retain the property's historic character while ensuring that the rehabilitated building meets current flood mitigation standards. Historic windows that could not be repaired were replaced with wood-frame windows. Copper trim details were designed to emulate the ones that washed away. The building's northeast corner, damaged by a collapsed power pole, was repaired with brick and mortar selected to match the building's historic materials. By undertaking this challenge, the project team is helping to revitalize Biltmore Village in the wake of the storm.

REHABILITATION

Mosaic Realty Office, 46 Orchard Street

Asheville Flooring LLC
Astralwerks Architectural Finishes
CJE Roofing and Exterior
Greg Podlesney
JAG Construction
Jonathan Cervantes
Kacia Jurdi
Michael & Rachel Figura
Mr. Rooter Plumbing
Ryan Morin – Luxgrain
Volt Electric USA
Willis Home Improvements

Constructed in 1923, this former residential building now serves as the Mosaic Realty Office. The project team learned that 46 Orchard Street was built for Harriette and Claude Edwards, who operated several apartment units out of the building in the early twentieth century. After years of

deferred maintenance, the property required extensive rehabilitation work. When the historic siding proved too deteriorated to be restored, the project team invested in custom-milled ten-inch German lap conforming to the exact profile of the original siding. The brick foundation was repointed with expertly matched lime mortar. The project also involved the replacement of the roof, the restoration of historic wood trim, plaster, and windows, and the preservation of interior features including the second-story hardwood flooring, original doors, and built-in furniture.

REHABILITATION

Old Europe Pastries, 18 Broadway Street

Al Gregory – Project Manager at Falcon Construction and Development
BCA Architecture and Design
Melinda Vetro

This commercial building was completed in 1914, just as Broadway was developing into a vibrant business district. Originally home to men's outfitters Neely-Bruns Company, the shop hosted several tenants over the decades, including an appliance vendor, a used book shop, and Smokey's Tavern, which operated out of this building for over fifty years.

By the time Old Europe Pastries purchased the property, the storefront had been altered and life-safety issues were abundant. The project team was confident that the building, with its arched fenestration and limestone parapet, could be rehabilitated to serve as a bakery and coffee shop. In addition to addressing structural concerns and updating mechanical systems, the project team designed a new outdoor dining space along Broadway meant to activate the storefront. The reintroduction of large façade windows also helps brighten the bakery's interior.

REHABILITATION

Raoulwood Stable Cottage, 394 Vanderbilt Road

Angela & Todd Newnam
Craig Rice – Treespaders of Greenville
Donnie Walker – Biltmore Irrigation and Landscape
Ed Snyder – Greenleaf Landscapes
Ken Pursley – Pursley-Dixon Architects
Roger Dalton – Dalton Roofing Company
Terry Caudle – Atamobile Enterprises

2026 Griffin Award Winners Continued

Tim Wright – Wright Family Custom Homes

Built in 1923 as part of Thomas Wadley Raoul's Biltmore Forest estate, this one-story, wood-clad cottage originally served as housing for a groom or chauffeur. Now a one-bedroom guesthouse, the building features stuccoed gable ends with vertical timber details and a central chimney with a Craftsman-style fireplace. During Hurricane Helene, the cottage was crushed by two white oaks that had been planted on the property as part of Chauncey Beadle's original landscape design.

Property owners Angela and Todd Newnam collaborated with Wright Family Custom Homes to rehabilitate the cottage. Working within the original footprint, the project team committed to salvaging the brick chimney and fireplace, wood floors, and single-pane windows. The Newnams also worked with Pursley-Dixon Architects to preserve the cottage's roofline while creating a vaulted, timbered ceiling in the living space.

REHABILITATION

Tunnel Studios, 940 Tunnel Road

Allison Williams
Del Lenhart
Jude Stuecker
Local Current
Paul Dixon
Steve Hefflin
Will Eccleston

This East Asheville building served as the home of Stuart Nye Jewelry for over seventy years. Stuart Nye was a silversmith and jeweler who began creating his famous dogwood designs in the 1920s. In 1948, Ralph Morris became Nye's business partner, and they opened a new jewelry workshop on Tunnel Road. Morris also built the Southern Highland Handicraft Guild Headquarters next door to Nye's studio, where his work was sold. With their live-edge siding, river rock masonry, and wood-paneled interiors, the buildings showcase the rustic influences that shaped the region's architecture in the mid-century.

The rehabilitation of the building into an artists' studio included diligent cleaning and refinishing of the building's pine walls and hardwood floors, as a fine green dust from copper work covered all the surfaces. The project team constructed semi-permanent walls in the workshop space to create smaller studios and retained the building's historic casement windows.

REHABILITATION

UpMarket Gallery, 66-70 N Market Street

Brent Campbell & Katherine Winkel – BCA Architects
Heather Davis
Kathryn Adams – Nice Time Glass
Sybil Argintar – Southeastern Preservation Services
Tina Councell & Kayla Councell – Iron Maiden Studios

Completed in 1926, this two-story brick commercial building is comprised of three office spaces which have hosted a variety of tenants over the past century. Heather Davis purchased the property in 2022 with

plans to rehabilitate the building into an office, retail, gallery, and event space called UpMarket Gallery.

The project team upheld rigorous preservation standards in their efforts to rehabilitate the building. The parapet, which had been missing from the façade since the eighties, was found in pieces on the roof of the building. Masons were able to recreate the feature using the original terracotta tiles. Additional work included the restoration of the storefront transoms and the replacement of non-original awnings and windows with historically appropriate materials. Inside the building, historic staircase details, tin ceilings, and wood floors were retained, and an elevator was added to ensure the building's accessibility.

RESEARCH, PUBLICATION AND EDUCATION

Come Hell or High Water: A Community Memory Project in the Aftermath of Tropical Storm Helene in Western North Carolina

Alex Morrison – Asheville Museum of Science
Alison Farley – Project Intern (UNC Asheville, Spring 2025)
Andrew Rainey – JMPRO Community Media
Ann McCutchan – Oral History Co-Lead
Ashley Whittle – UNCA Head of Special Collections and University Archivist
Bill Green – Oral History Interviewer & Photographer
Bonnie Antosh – Outreach Volunteer
Caitrin Robinson – Digitization Volunteer
Carissa Pfeiffer – Buncombe County Public Libraries Special Collections Librarian
Catherine Amos – Preservation Society of Asheville & Buncombe County Communication, Education and Outreach Coordinator
Daniel Galewsky – Tech/Admin Volunteer
Emily Cadmus – Project Coordinator
Fiora Mecale – Oral History Interviewer
Grace Buckner – Madison County Public Library
Gretchen LeMaistre – Oral History Interviewer
Heather Maloy – Terpsicorps Theatre of Dance
Jed Grossman – Outreach Volunteer
Jenny Bowen – Buncombe County Public Libraries Special Collections Library Assistant
Jonah Turner – Project Intern (Warren Wilson College, Fall 2025)
K. LeAnne Johnson – Swannanoa Valley Museum Executive Director
Kate Sepp – Oral History Interviewer & Tech/Admin Volunteer
Katherine Cutshall – Buncombe County Public Libraries Special Collections Manager
Kathy Hill – Buncombe County Public Libraries Special Collections Librarian
Kellie Monacell – Outreach Volunteer
Leigh Ogus – Swannanoa Valley Museum Assistant Director
Lindsey Grossman – Outreach Volunteer
Maggie McMains – Outreach Volunteer
Mary Greene – Digitization Volunteer
Mike Holcombe – Digitization Volunteer
Pete Schreiner – Tech/Admin Volunteer
Susan Kraft – Oral History Co-Lead
Suzanne Colwell – Oral History Interviewer & Digitization Volunteer
Tammy Young – Buncombe County Public Libraries Black Mountain Library Assistant
Thomas Bennett – Digitization Volunteer
Will Bahr – Outreach Volunteer

Come Hell or High Water was designed as a crowdsourcing campaign to build a

comprehensive digital archive documenting the impact of Tropical Storm Helene in Western North Carolina. Led by Project Coordinator Emily Cadmus, the Friends of Buncombe County Special Collections and a team of volunteers collaborated to collect and present materials that document experiences of the storm and its aftermath across the region. Participants have contributed photos, videos, emails, screenshots, diary entries, songs, and poems to an online repository where they will be preserved and accessible to the public. The project team has also conducted several dozen oral history interviews which record first-hand accounts of the storm and its effects.

Come Hell or High Water explores climate resilience, causes of the disaster, and how citizens might be better prepared for extreme climate events in the future. The project intends to create a pathway for reflection, healing, and development of community memory. Come Hell or High Water was launched in 2025 and continues to accept contributions.

RESEARCH, PUBLICATION AND EDUCATION

Urban Renewal Impact: The Movie

Priscilla Robinson
Todd Gragg

This documentary film explores urban renewal's effects on Asheville's Black residents and neighborhoods. The project is the result of a collaboration between filmmaker Todd Gragg and historian Priscilla Robinson. Todd connects Asheville's story to a larger national context, revealing how Black communities across America were systematically uprooted by large-scale development projects. Using research she has conducted over the past eighteen years, Priscilla remaps and reconstructs the once tight-knit Black neighborhood of Southside, the largest urban renewal project in the Southeast.

Through interviews and extensive archival investigation, the filmmakers allow audiences to see Asheville through the eyes of community members who have experienced displacement and its ramifications. The film highlights the link between urban renewal and disparity in the realms of education, economic opportunity, criminal justice, health, and housing. It conveys a deep care for Asheville's built environment, cultural landscapes, and community members.

RESEARCH, PUBLICATION AND EDUCATION

West Asheville History Museum

Conda Painter
Sanjit Patel

In response to the need to document the history of Haywood Road and its environs, the West Asheville History Museum was established in 2020. Local historian Conda Painter secured a large window space at 727 Haywood Road, formerly known as the old Fortune Hardware store.

A third-generation native of West Asheville, Conda was inspired by the rich stories that her family had passed down, and at the age of eleven she made it her goal to establish a small museum in her

neighborhood. She began by offering walking tours, but to bring her vision to life, Conda worked with Sanjit Patel to build and frame the museum displays. One of the museum's goals is to expand into a larger space, allowing for more exhibits and programming. She adds, "The idea...came from my belief that people should not only read about these places, but truly experience them—walking through the community, seeing historic buildings, and stepping back into the past."

RESTORATION

Lou Pollock Memorial Park Entry Gate

Congregation Beth Israel
Dustin Roeder – Project Manager, Living Stone Masonry
Wesley Hufstader
William Waller – Owner, Living Stone Masonry

Established in 1916, the Lou Pollock Memorial Park was originally known as the Mount Sinai Jewish Cemetery. Lou Pollock, a Russian-born shoe merchant, helped found the cemetery in the early twentieth century to ensure that Jewish residents of Asheville had access to appropriate and affordable funeral and burial services. In 1949, the West Asheville Hebrew Cemetery Association renamed the grounds in Pollock's honor.

When a large truck damaged the cemetery's granite columns and iron arch, Living Stone Masonry was contracted to restore the entry. The team repointed the masonry with matching lime mortar and reinstalled the mounting hardware with precision, protecting the structural and historic integrity of the stonework. Because the site's tree canopy inhibited crane access, the team constructed complex scaffolding structures to lift the granite capstones and the iron arch.

STEWARDSHIP

Montreat Stewards

In early 2021, word got out that the Mountain Retreat Association, or MRA, had plans to demolish three of their historic lodges and replace them with a much larger hotel. Residents and visitors raised concerns about the loss of the historic structures, the environmental impact, and changes to the character of the town. Quickly, a group of concerned citizens formed to fight the proposed development, calling themselves the Montreat Stewards. For five years, the Montreat Stewards have diligently fundraised and advocated for their community.

In the midst of an ongoing legal battle regarding development permits, the MRA made the extremely disappointing decision to move forward with the demolition of the historic buildings shortly after Helene hit. It was a move that the Montreat Stewards said "...shakes our faith in the foundation of both legal process and trust in our neighboring institutions." Sadly, this is a move we have seen before: demolish the historic structures in hopes that it will take some of the steam out of the fight. But the Montreat Stewards are not giving up. The implications of this case are too great and the fight continues.

THE BETTY TENN LAWRENCE AWARD FOR PRESERVATION EXCELLENCE

Betty Lawrence

See page two.

46TH ANNUAL GRIFFIN AWARD SPONSORS!































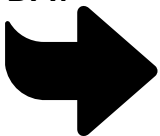




POLLEN SEASON CERTIFIED

Bandanas

GET
YOURS
TODAY



\$175,000 IN GRANTS AWARDED TO BILTMORE VILLAGE REHAB PROJECTS

Last fall, an anonymous donor made a generous gift of \$175,000 to award seven grants of \$25,000 for the rehabilitation, restoration, and repair of Hurricane Helene-damaged structures that are 50 years of age or older in the Biltmore Village local historic district. This architecturally distinct neighborhood has contributed to the cultural and commercial fabric of Asheville for over a century, and PSABC is excited to share stories of its resilience.

1 VILLAGE LANE:
Clarence Barker Memorial Hospital/Biltmore Hospital

This one-and-a-half-story former hospital features casement windows, a variety of roof shapes, and pebbledash cladding. The owners of the 1902 building, which now functions as an office complex, applied for a grant to offset efforts to complete interior painting and floor repairs that will allow them to reopen several rental spaces.

2 ALL SOULS CRESCENT:
Richard Sharp Smith Cottage

This 1895 gambrel-roofed cottage served as Bette Boutique prior to the storm. The owners of the building sought grant funding to support the restoration of historic elements including original brick chimneys, doors, windows, and the interior staircase. They are eager to return to the Village post-rehabilitation.

3 SWAN STREET:
Richard Sharp Smith Cottage

The scope of the rehabilitation project undertaken by the owners of this 1900 cottage includes the repair and replacement of water-damaged materials throughout the building. The owners share that grant funding “has enabled us to rebuild key portions of the interior, including plumbing improvements, ramp repairs, new drywall installation, and the start of electrical work. This support has served as a critical catalyst, helping us move these essential projects forward and bringing the space closer to readiness for a future tenant.”

4 ALL SOULS CRESCENT:
Richard Sharp Smith Cottage

This 1900 cottage was purchased by the current owners in April 2025 to prevent its purchase by an out-of-town investor. They plan to use grant funding to replace damaged drywall and flooring, complete interior and exterior painting, and repair broken windows and rotted woodwork. Upon rehabilitation, they hope to bring a local independent business to the space.



6 ALL SOULS CRESCENT:
Richard Sharp Smith Cottage

The owners of this 1900 cottage applied for grant funding to support work that includes insulation replacement, floor refinishing, and masonry repair. Dogwood Darlings, the children’s boutique that operated out of the building prior to the flooding, celebrated its grand reopening there earlier this spring. The owners of the building shared that “the scope of the project turned out to be twice as much as we had planned for... The grant definitely helped to keep us moving forward and for that we are very grateful that you chose us!”

7 BOSTON WAY:
McGeachy Building

This 1930 commercial building hosts New Morning Gallery, which reopened last year, and Bellagio Art to Wear, which continues to undergo rehabilitation supported by grant funding. The project involves salvaging the historic in-slab electrical network, as replacing the system would impact the building’s historic character. The property owner shares an update on the process: “The conduit from the panels had to be cleaned out with a pressure washer, unstopped of the mud and silt then dried and new wiring installed. Several of the outlets and junction boxes had to be jackhammered out to be able to connect to the existing conduit in the slab.”

26 LODGE STREET:
Biltmore-Oteen Bank

Constructed in 1928, this wedge-shaped former bank building with Georgian Revival features hosted the Village’s Southern Highland Craft Guild shop before the storm. Grant funding will support a rehabilitation project that involves the replacement of electrical and plumbing systems and the repair of historic materials such as doors, windows, and water-damaged surfaces.

ANNOUNCING PSABC'S GRANT AWARDEES



© Buncombe County Special Collections

The Preservation Society of Asheville and Buncombe County grant program assists our community in preservation related projects. These grants are entirely funded by individual donations to PSABC. The grants are broken out into 3 categories. **BRICKS-AND-MORTAR:** Rehabilitation, restoration, and repair of structures that are 50 years of age or older. **PUBLIC EDUCATION:** Development of educational materials and programs that advance knowledge of our shared history. **PLANNING, SURVEY, AND DESIGNATION:** Planning and design for building rehabilitation and restoration projects, historic resource surveys, and local or national designations. The following organizations have each received \$5,000 in historic preservation grants:

Varick Chapel AME Zion Church

This Neoclassical church was built circa 1915 by celebrated brickmason James Vester Miller. Grant funds will support the repair of one of the sanctuary’s large windows, as well as other water mitigation efforts.

SoundSpace@Rabbit's

Built in 1947, this Black-owned tourist court and soul food kitchen called Rabbit’s Motel is now home to SoundSpace@Rabbit’s, a music rehearsal and art studio facility that will soon feature a cafe. Grant funding will support the construction of a retaining wall that will help prevent structural failure of the historic buildings.

THE NEXT ROUND OF GRANTS WILL BE IN THE FALL

Visit psabc.org/preservation-grants for more information and thank you for preserving with us!

THE STORY OF MILITARY HOUSING IN THE REGION

Homes Exclusively for GIs



By Dale W. Slusser
Architectural Historian

The urgent need for more housing for veterans returning home at the close of World War II was both a national and local crisis.

In February of 1946, President Harry Truman gained bipartisan approval from Congress for what was touted as the “greatest house-building program in history”;¹ to build 2,700,000 houses in two years, giving returning veterans priority. To achieve their goal, the government called for increased production of building materials and increased training and recruitment for workers in the housing field.² The new program also promised more government subsidies for housing and for the government to “stimulate the new pre-fabricated housing industry.”³ The actual building of these houses mostly played out in local governments through private enterprises. A recent inquiry has brought to our attention a little-known story of two local attempts to provide this urgent housing need for the influx of veterans returning to Asheville and Buncombe County. In conjunction with the newly enacted Federal housing programs, here in Asheville several local private corporations were formed in 1946 to meet the challenge, including the Atlas Home Construction Company and the Asheville American Legion Housing Corporation.

Atlas Home Construction Company

Harold Goldbloom, born and raised in Minnesota, arrived in Asheville in 1938 from Los Angeles, California. Goldbloom was a salesman/businessman, who upon arrival to Asheville, immediately became involved in two different business ventures: Smoke Mount Industries and Atlas Home Improvement Company.⁴ Goldbloom became partner and vice-president of Smoke Mount Industries, a dress manufacturing company started in Asheville by Julius Lowenbein. At the same time, Harold Goldbloom also started his own business, Atlas Home Improvement Company, a franchise roofing and siding company affiliated with Johns-Manville manufacturers of roofing, siding, insulation and related home improvement products.

After the United States had entered World War II, all building materials were needed for defense purposes, which, combined with the loss of men to the draft, forced Goldbloom to shut down his Atlas Home Improvement Company. Smoke Mount Industries continued to operate during the war; however, due to a devastating fire in 1943, they had to relocate from their Biltmore Avenue location to leased facilities at 217 Coxe Avenue.⁵

By 1946, the War had ended and local manufacturers, no longer required to give federal government and military vendors priority, were getting back to their pre-war manufacturing. Upon the announcement of President Truman’s proposed new housing program in February of 1946, Harold Goldbloom decided to reactivate his pre-war Atlas Home Improvement Company. However, instead of operating it as a roofing and siding business, Atlas Home Improvement Company was re-established as a general contractor, with the purpose of building low-cost homes for returning GIs. Atlas Home Improvement made its first property purchase in February of 1946, buying five lots at the intersection of Park Lane Avenue and Sand Hill School Road, in Sand Hill Estates (a 1944 development by S. M. White).⁶

“WE ARE BUILDING homes exclusively for GIs on government priority”;⁷ announced the Atlas Home Improvement Company, in an April 28, 1946 advertisement in the local newspaper. The advertisement further announced: “see sample home nearing construction of Sand Hill School road off Sand Hill road. \$6,000. Contracts will also be taken for additional homes.”⁸

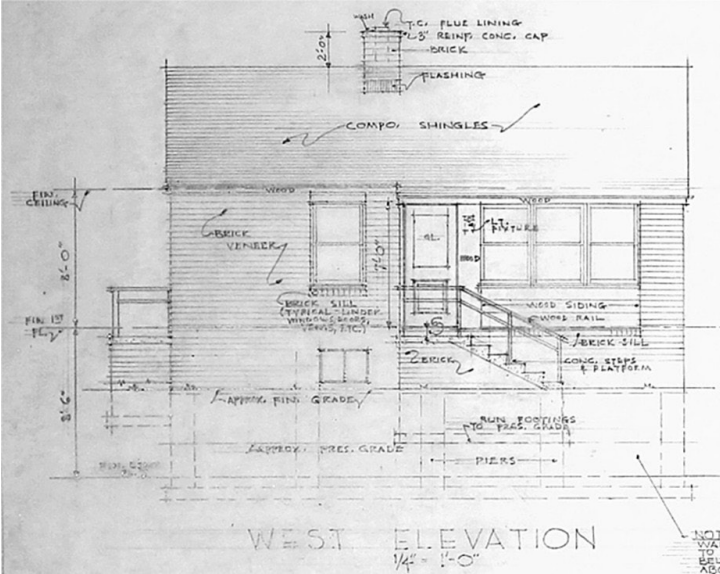
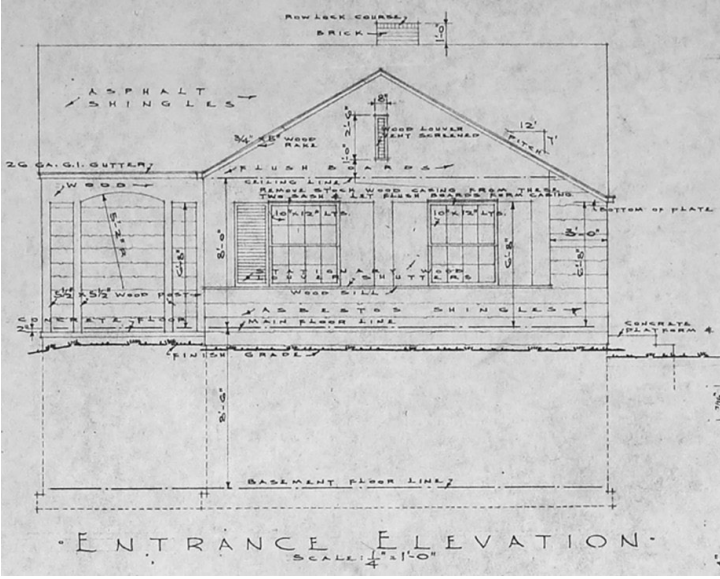
In September of 1946, Goldbloom and Atlas Home Improvement sold their first house (their sample house), at the northeast corner of Park Lane Avenue and Sand Hill School Road (33 Sand Hill School Road), to Beach and Blanche Keller. In the deed to the property is a statement that explains what it meant to construct a house on “government priority”: “The building on the premises hereby conveyed was built under Priorities Regulation 33 (Builder’s Serial No. 6053-1066). Under its regulation a limit is placed on either the sales



PHOTOS ABOVE, FROM TOP First house built by Atlas Home Construction Company for a GI, at 33 Sand Hill School Road. Second house built by Atlas Home Construction Company for a GI, at 72 East Street in Oakley.

BELOW The Entrance Elevation (Top) from Henry Gaines’ drawings for this house designed for the Atlas Home Construction Co., next to a photo of the house at 23 Laurel Avenue, built from his drawings. The West Elevation (Lower) from Anthony Lord’s drawings for this house designed for the Atlas Home Construction Co., next to a photo of the house at 25 Laurel Avenue, built from his drawings.

BOTTOM A brick-veneer “Type A” house was built on Lot 49 (111 Barnard Avenue) and an asbestos-shingle clad house “Type B” was built next door on Lot 50 (115 Barnard Avenue).



price or the rent for the premises or both and preferences are given to veterans of World War II or members of the Armed Forces in selling or renting.”⁹ According to an accompanying deed of trust, the Kellers paid \$6,500 for the property—probably \$6,000 for the house and \$500 to cover the lot costs.¹⁰

In November 1946, the Atlas Home Improvement Company made its second property purchase of two lots on East Street in the Oakley neighborhood.¹¹ Purchased under the name of Harold Goldbloom (DBA Atlas Home Improvement Company), the lot was purchased from Clegg C. Connell. Connell, a young veteran, had purchased the lot from his mother-in-law, who lived next door at 76 East Street. Goldbloom built a brick house on the Clegg Connell lot (72 East Street) for \$7,500.¹² Goldbloom apparently financed the Connell home, as he held title to the lots and house until finally selling them to Connell in 1949, allowing Connell to assume the balance remaining of the original deed of trust.¹³

In February of 1947, Goldbloom chose to reorganize and re-incorporate the Atlas Home Improvement Company as the Atlas Home Construction Company, with Harold and Ruth Goldbloom and son A. Stanton Goldbloom as the principal shareholders.¹⁴ Just prior to forming the new company, Harold and Ruth Goldbloom had purchased four lots in the Edgewood neigh-

borhood of North Asheville under their own names.¹⁵ Upon incorporation of the new company, the Goldbloom’s transferred their ownership of the Edgewood and Sand Hill lots to the Atlas Home Construction Company.¹⁶

As Harold Goldbloom and the Atlas Home Construction Company were buying properties for its proposed houses for GIs, they were having local architects design and prepare the architectural drawings for the new houses. Harold Goldbloom first hired architect Henry Irvan Gaines (his offices were at 82 Wall Street) to design a prototypical house to be built, according to the two plot plans on a March 1, 1947 drawing,¹⁷ on Lot 23 in Edgewood and on Lots 70 and 71 in Sandhill Estates. However, on a copy of the same drawing, the plot plan for the two Gaines’ houses on Sandhill Hill School Road was crossed over and marked “VOID”. Only one of these houses was actually built by Atlas Home Construction Company on Lot 23 in Edgewood Park (now addressed as 23 Laurel Avenue), and it was actually built in reverse plan from shown on the drawings. The frame house was built on a full basement and was sided in asbestos shingles. The company pulled a permit to build this house (to cost \$8,250)



on April 11, 1947.¹⁸ However, soon after the Gaines’ drawings were completed and construction had begun on the house at 23 Laurel Avenue, Goldbloom chose another architect—Anthony Lord—to design his subsequent house projects for the Atlas Home Construction Company. Lord finished the first of his drawings on April 22, 1947: a design for two houses. The April 22nd drawings show the floor plans and exterior elevations for a small two-bedroom house that was under 800 square feet. Designated as “Type B”, this wood-frame house was designed to be clad in brick veneer with a full-basement.¹⁹ As shown on the plot plan in Lord’s drawings, this “Type B” house was built at 25 Laurel Avenue, in Edgewood Park. The third sheet in this set of Anthony Lord drawings, though dated four days later (April 26, 1947),²⁰ show the floor plans and

continued on the next page

Homes Exclusively for GIs continued from page 6

exterior elevations for a “Type A” house, which, although also just a two-bedroom, one-bathroom home, was designed to be slightly larger at almost 900 square feet. This “Type A” house was designed as a wood-frame house with a full basement, similar to “Type B”, except that it was clad in asbestos siding. As shown on the plot plat on Sheet 1, this “Type A” house was built at 27 Laurel Avenue, next door to the “Type B” house.

In May of 1947, Lord completed drawings for two additional houses to be built by the Atlas Home Construction Company, on Barnard Avenue in Edgewood Park. The houses were duplicate plans of the Laurel Avenue houses, "Type A" and "Type B". A brick-veneered "Type A" house was built on Lot 49 (111 Barnard Avenue) and an asbestos-shingle clad house "Type B" was built next door on Lot 50 (115 Barnard Avenue).

In June of 1947, Anthony Lord's firm completed drawings for four additional houses for the Atlas Home Construction Company.²¹ Similar to Lord's designs for his earlier houses in Edgewood Park, these four houses were designed to be compact. The houses were designed in two types, similar in plan, each with two bedrooms and one bath. The Type 'A' floor plan comes in at just over 740 square feet, and the Type 'B' at just 675 square feet. The four houses were wood-frame construction, but houses labeled with a '1' were brick veneer and those labeled '2' were clad in asbestos shingle-siding. The plot plan showed these four houses to be built at the intersection of Sand Hill School Road and Park Lane Avenue. Two houses (B-1 and B-2), were built on Lot 47, house A-1 was built on Lot 72, and house A-2 was built on Lot 73. Although these houses have been altered, they remain on their respective lots at 12 Park Lane Avenue (B-1), 37 Sand Hill School Road (B-2), 27 Sand Hill School Road (A-1), and 25 Sand Hill School Road (A-2).

Atlas Home Construction Company's foray into building houses for GLs was short-lived and not very successful. By 1948, only a few of their houses had been purchased, and so coupled with the change in low-financing for GLs buying houses, the company was suspended on February 2, 1948.²² The remaining unsold houses (which were the majority of houses built by the company) were subsequently sold on assumption, with each homeowner assuming the respective existing mortgages.²³ A business partner, L. H. Pollock, purchased three of the finished but unsold houses in one deed transfer.²⁴

**Asheville American Legion
Housing Corporation**

While Goldbloom was trying to build affordable houses for GIs, another entity, the American Legion, was attempting to do the same thing—but on a larger scale and with infinitely more success. On February 6, 1946, James H. Hensley, a local realtor and head of the housing committee of Asheville's American Legion Post 2, made the first of numerous appeals "urging persons who have rooms or apartments to allow veterans, with wives and children, to occupy them at least temporarily".²⁵ A few weeks later, Hensley makes another appeal in the form of an advertisement/announcement: "If you have a room, apartment, or house for rent, furnished or unfurnished, or if you know where one might be had, please call my office. Any of these properties that are rented to GI's there will be no commission charge to the property owner, as I am rendering this service, being chairman of the American Legion Housing Committee."²⁶

As Hensley was making his appeals for housing for returning GIs, Asheville's American Legion Post 2 had formed a "housing committee", looking into a possible solution for the problem. Chairman of the committee James Hensley announced on February 20, 1946 that despite a good response to their appeals, there were still 250 applications pending for housing for veterans in Asheville and Buncombe County.²⁷ Then on February 27th, it was announced that the American Legion's housing committee had authorized the formation of a non-profit corporation to bring in and erect prefabricated houses for veterans to help relieve Asheville's housing shortage.²⁸ The Legion's plan was that the corporation would first bring in and erect five houses, and "if proved satisfactory"²⁹ they would bring in an additional 195 houses. It was further announced that the houses would "be setup and offered for sale at cost price plus the price of the lot to veterans of World War II"³⁰

The “Asheville American Legion Housing Corporation” was officially formed and registered the following day (February 28, 1946).³¹ A little over a week later, it was announced that Gene Ochsenreiter was named President of the Asheville American Legion Housing Corporation, with the following serving as officers of the corporation: R. R. Williams, Vice-President; James H. Hensley, Secretary; Irwin Monk, Treasurer.³²

The Asheville American Legion

Housing Corporation subsequently signed a contract with the Federal Public Housing Authority to purchase 200 prefabricated houses from the Authority and erect the houses to be sold to local qualified veterans. Although the houses were pre-fabricated, they were not manufactured specifically for the Asheville American Legion Housing Corporation; they had originally been prefabricated in the early 1940s and erected as temporary housing for defense workers on military bases along the eastern seaboard. The Asheville American Legion Housing Corporation announced that the houses were coming from Norfolk, Virginia.

The first five houses arrived in Asheville in April of 1946.³³ The first house was erected, technically “re-erected” on a new foundation on a lot on McDowell Street in downtown Asheville. Although assigned to a veteran, this first house was opened as a “model house” on May 12 1946.³⁴ It was reported the following day that “between five and six thousand” people had toured the open house on its first day.³⁵ The model house was built on a lot along McDowell Street “between Choctaw street and the Victoria Road viaduct”. The actual negotiations for bringing the houses to Asheville and the details of erecting, financing, and delivering them were being handled by three local realtors, R. Fred Gray, Roy P. Booth and Arthur A. York. Allocation of the houses was being made by a committee appointed by the Legion housing corporation to process and approve the submitted applications. It was announced by the Legion committee that the turnkey purchase price would be under \$4,000 and financed through GI loans. Willie N. Sartor, a Black veteran, would be the owner of the model house at 135 McDowell Street. The other four houses (of these first five), it was reported, had been allocated as follows: Pine Street house to Howard Maney (608 Marietta Street); Sulphur Springs house to Frank Killian (160 Sulphur Springs Road); Trotter Place house to George Yarborough (65 Trotter Place); and Grovemont house to J. W. Faucette, Jr. (215 Stonewall Avenue). Each house was reported to have “two bedrooms, a bathroom complete with fixtures and built in tub, a kitchenette with coal range furnished, a dinette, and a livingroom. Heat is furnished by a central coal heater.”³⁶

As the Legion began to bring in more houses, they encountered a bureaucratic roadblock. On June 1, 1946, it was reported that the Legion had asked attorney R. R. Williams, with the assistance of Sen. Clyde R. Hoey, to aid in “seeking a simplification of regulations in regard to priorities for materials to be used in connection with the erection of pre-fabricated houses for veterans.”³⁷ Williams reported that, “under the current regulations it is necessary to apply for a separate priority permit for each of the 200 houses, giving the location and the person purchasing the house.”³⁸ As it is not feasible always, reports Williams, to know where the houses are going before they arrive, the Legion is “asking for a blanket priority that will assist in expediting the program just as the Federal government is attempting to expedite the housing program in general.”³⁹ One month later, on July 2nd, a three-man committee, composed of City Manager Pat Burdette, Gene Ochserheit (head of the Asheville American Legion Corporation), and attorney R. R. Williams headed for Washington, DC to confer with Federal Housing Expediter Wilson Wyatt on problems confronting the American Legion housing program.⁴⁰

On August 21, 1946, the Legion Housing Corporation called a meeting to explain to the veterans who had applied for houses the reason for the delay. It was reported that the 195 houses were being “held in Atlanta”⁴¹, which probably meant that they were being held up by red tape in the Atlanta offices of the Federal Public Housing Authority. However, on August 29th, the Legion announced that a new plan had been approved by the Federal Public Housing Authority and that their housing program “is ready to roll again.”⁴² In fact, it announced twelve houses were already on the way to Asheville, as Robinson Bros. Construction Company had been hired to “dismantle the units in Norfolk and erect them here.”⁴³ The overall plan, it was reported, was to erect 200 houses at two per week by 1948.

The newly approved plan, worked out by the American Legion Housing Corporation, was that the two local contractors (Robinson Brothers and Merchant Company) would finance the purchase and erection of the houses, until a “permanent loan is worked out” by the veteran/buyer. “When the Federal Public Housing Authority approved the new plan, it allowed the non-profit corporation to make a five percent charge for financing, with three of the five percent going to the contractor for financing the building until a permanent GI loan is made, and the two percent remaining will be applied on the corporation’s overhead.”²⁴⁴

By the beginning of October 1946,
American Legion Housing Corporation's

James Hensley announced that they were “now accepting additional applications from veterans for prefabricated houses”, and that “arrangements have been made through local banks and finance companies to make loans for both lots and houses”.⁴⁵ It was further announced that forty-two pre-fabricated houses had been built, were under construction, or were on their way from Norfolk.⁴⁶ By the end of October, the American Legion Corporation announced that sixty-seven houses were now under construction (re-erection) in the city. The corporation further announced that their contract with the Federal Public Housing Authority required them to erect and sell twenty-five houses per month to veterans.⁴⁷ The prefabricated houses were described as having: “four rooms, including a combination kitchen and dining room, six closets, built-in kitchen cabinets, a coal range, a heater, hardwood floors, a 25-year roof, window shades, window blinds, and a flower box”.⁴⁸

It was reported that the houses being “brought in” by the Legion were coming from Norfolk, Virginia; however, more specifically, they were coming from Alexander Park, a huge temporary housing development built for World War II defense workers in Portsmouth, Virginia, just across the river from Norfolk. Alexander Park was opened in 1942 as part of the “Federal Security Administration’s vast Victory Village demountable housing project.”⁴⁹ The 4,250 prefabricated houses in this “temporary village” were manufactured by Barrett & Hilp, of San Francisco, California.⁵⁰ Barrett & Hilp began erecting the houses at Portsmouth in May of 1942,⁵¹ and they were all completed by November of 1942. A distinctive feature of the houses, besides the fact that they were prefabricated, was that they were clad in unpainted cedar siding.

The story of the building of these unique houses is both fascinating and a historically significant chapter in the story of the US housing industry. In order to house the massive and rapid influx of defense workers needed at the Norfolk Navy Yard at the start of World War II, the federal government sought out innovative contractors who could meet the demand through mass-production. They first hired the now famous Levitt & Sons, who would later become the post-war leader in mass-produced housing. Levitt was commissioned to build 2,350 homes in eighteen months for Navy personnel at the Norfolk shipyard.⁵² However, the demand for housing for the thousands of factory workers, shipbuilders, and servicemen needed at Norfolk/Portsmouth was so intense that more than one contractor was required. Barrett and Hilp contractors of San Francisco signed a contract with the federal government in 1942 to build 5,000 houses in five months (154 days). This feat was only accomplished by Barrett and Hilp in cooperation with the Homasote Company. Homasote is a fiberboard made from wood pulp, newspaper, and resin, which was originally developed by the Homasote Company in 1929 for car roofs under the name "Agasote". Later the company developed a wallboard product for use in buildings. In trying to find new markets for this wallboard, the company developed a prefabricated building system, named

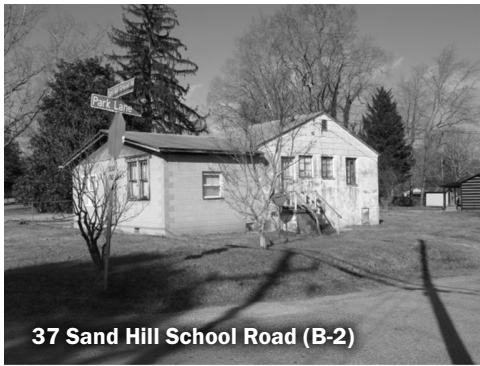
“Precision Built”. The system was a stressed skin wall panel system, consisting of 2x2 wall studs with a layer of Homasote on either side.⁵³ The wall and floor panels were then bolted together at their corners and junctions, making the houses easy to erect and assemble on-site, and also making them “demountable”. These houses were designed by architects Harland Bartholomew and Associates. The architects’ design was given to the Homasote Company to manufacture as prefabricated panels, roof and floor systems.

In order to expedite the building of the 5,000 houses and cut costs for transport and delivery, Barrett and Hilp set up their own factory on-site in an abandoned fertilizer plant. In an arrangement with the Homasote Company, akin to a franchise, the Barrett and Hilp “factory” used the same Homasote Company’s materials and its mass-production “Precision-Built” building system as used in the Homasote’s main factory in Trenton, NJ. The timeline for the project required the production of sixty houses a day, however, the system was so efficient that Barrett and Hilp were able to build eighty houses a day!¹⁴

After the war, in 1946, the Federal Public Housing Authority sold off many of the Alexander Park houses to out-of-state groups (like the Asheville American Legion Corporation) to be relocated and reused as post-war housing. It was reported that some of the houses were relocated to Howard University in Washington, DC as housing for veterans, and that others were going to cities such as Asheville, Reidville, and Leakesville in North Carolina.⁵⁵ Some of the houses of Alexander Park remained on-site and were used as post-war housing. In 1956, a wealthy man purchased the entire Alexander Park and turned the houses into low-income rental units. All the remaining Homasote-houses in Alexander Park were ultimately demolished in 2002.⁵⁶

In November of 1946, as the Asheville American Legion Corporation continued to bring in more houses for veterans in Asheville and Buncombe County, it was announced that the corporation would also be bringing in houses for veterans in the surrounding counties. In Hendersonville, in nearby Henderson County, a group of concerned citizens formed their own non-profit organization called "Prefabricated Houses, Inc.". This new organization announced that they would be building houses for veterans, and that the houses would be coming "from the Federal Public Housing Authority through the American Legion Housing Corporation of Asheville".⁵⁷ They further announced that the Henderson County houses will be "the same type as those being erected in Asheville and Brevard. They were formerly used by defense workers, and will be dismantled and brought here by trucks."⁵⁸ Speaking of Brevard, a small group of the Alexander Park houses were also brought to Brevard, in Transylvania County. In fact, in December of 1946, the Brevard Town Council approved the opening of a new street, to be named Robinson Avenue, on which "several GI's have agreed to erect prefabricated houses on one side of the street".⁵⁹

continued on page 8



37 Sand Hill School Road (B-2)



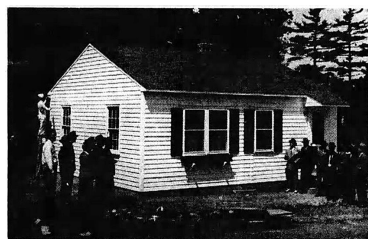
12 Park Lane Avenue (B-1)



27 Sand Hill School Road (A-1)



25 Sand Hill School Road (A-2)



The first Asheville American Housing Corporation pre-fabricated house completed at 135 McDowell Street. Outfitted with new painting, new roofing, shutters, and a window box for flowers.



In 1946, nine of the Asheville American Legion Housing Corporation's houses obtained from Norfolk were erected on nine consecutive lots on the westside of Murdock Avenue. All nine of these houses have survived and are occupied.

Homes Exclusively for GIs continued from page 7

In March of 1947, the Asheville American Legion Housing Corporation announced that it had not only fulfilled its contract to bring in 200 houses for veterans, but that it had in fact already brought in and erected 210 houses, with forty more arriving soon.⁶⁰ A few weeks later the American Legion Housing Corporation announced that it has obtained an additional thirty pre-fabricated houses for this area, bringing the total number of houses brought in to 280.⁶¹ “The last lot of houses,” further reported the American Legion, “was obtained at Charleston, S. C. and are of different design from the original 250.”⁶² In June, after twenty of the Charleston houses had arrived, the American Legion reported that two of these houses had already been erected, and that these “houses will be furnished with asbestos shingle siding.”⁶³

One of these first two prefabricated houses obtained from Charleston was erected at 4 Laurel Avenue, in North Asheville, for veteran Hampton A. Guthrie. Guthrie, a Madison County native, had served in the Army from September 1941 until the end of the war. He served mostly in Hawaii where he had been sent shortly after the attack on Pearl Harbor (December 1941).⁶⁴ Guthrie apparently had been on the list to purchase an American Legion house before the Charleston houses had arrived, as he had purchased his lot in February of 1947.⁶⁵ In May 1947 Guthrie obtained a permit to erect a “four room prefabricated residence” on Laurel Avenue, to cost \$3,500.⁶⁶

Besides the asbestos shingle siding, these Charleston houses were identifiable from the Norfolk houses in that they had a centered entrance door flanked on each side by double paired sash windows.

So, specifically where did the Charleston houses come from? Most likely they came from the “Liberty Homes” wartime “temporary housing” development built during 1942-1943. In 1942, the Federal Works Agency began the “Liberty Homes” project in North Charleston to house the rapid influx of defense workers serving the Charleston Navy Yard. The project called for the erection of 2,000 demountable houses. The contract to build the houses was given to three contractors. Green Lumber of Laurel, Mississippi was to build 1,120 of the houses, Henry C. Beck Company of Atlanta, Georgia and Dallas, Texas was to build 500 units, and Skinner & Ruddock of Charleston were contracted to build 380 units.⁶⁷ The houses built by the three contractors were similar but differentiated by the exterior cladding: the 1,120 built by Green Lumber Company were clad in wooden clapboards, Henry C. Beck Company's 500 houses were clad in wood shingles, and the Skinner & Ruck houses were clad in asbestos shingle siding.⁶⁸ One of the differences of the Charleston demountable houses from the Norfolk houses, is that they used Upson board for the wall panels (instead of Homasote), and the panels/sections of the Charleston houses were connected with metal straps secured with double-headed nails. The nails would be driven in up to the first nail head, leaving

the second head exposed to be used for “demounting” the panels.⁶⁹

Although the Guthrie house at 4 Laurel Avenue, which has asbestos shingle siding, was no doubt one of the demountable houses built by Skinner & Ruddock at Charleston, apparently not all of the Charleston houses brought to Asheville were Skinner & Ruddock-built houses. For example, the house at 162 Chatham Road (next door to 4 Laurel Avenue), which was also brought in from the Liberty Homes development by the Asheville American Legion Housing Corporation, is of a slightly different design and is clad in wood clapboards. I suspect that it was one of the demountable houses built by Green Lumber Company of Laurel, Mississippi.

Just as the Asheville American Legion Housing Corporation was bringing in the final thirty houses for veterans, Congress was enacting new fiscal policies that would be the death knell of the Legion’s housing program. On July 1, 1947, the local newspaper announced that the Asheville American Legion Housing Corporation had “launched a move to reinstate the authority of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation to buy GI paper mortgage from local lending agencies”.⁷⁰ It was further reported that, “RFC’s authority in this field, expired today under terms of legislation approved by Congress late last night.” Although Congress voted to extend the RFC for another year, it canceled RFC’s permission to buy GI paper mortgage loans, which took away the incentive and security for local banks and

lending institutions to write low-interest GI mortgages. On July 23, 1947, it was reported that Twelfth District Representative Monroe M. Redden, Senator William B. Umsted, and Senator Clyde Hoey would be backing a new bill put forth by Senator John J. Sparkman (D-Ala) to reinstate RFC’s authority to buy GI home mortgage paper.⁷¹ But, although the Senate passed Sparkman’s bill two days later, which would have allowed RFC to resume its purchase of GI home mortgage loans, the bill was not able to be passed by the House of Representatives during its current session, and so the bill was dropped.⁷² A few months later, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Jr. publicly accused the national American Legion’s Housing Committee of being “stacked in favor of real estate interests”.⁷³ By May of 1948 the Asheville American Legion announced that it had one prefabricated house remaining, to be sold to any qualified veteran.⁷⁴

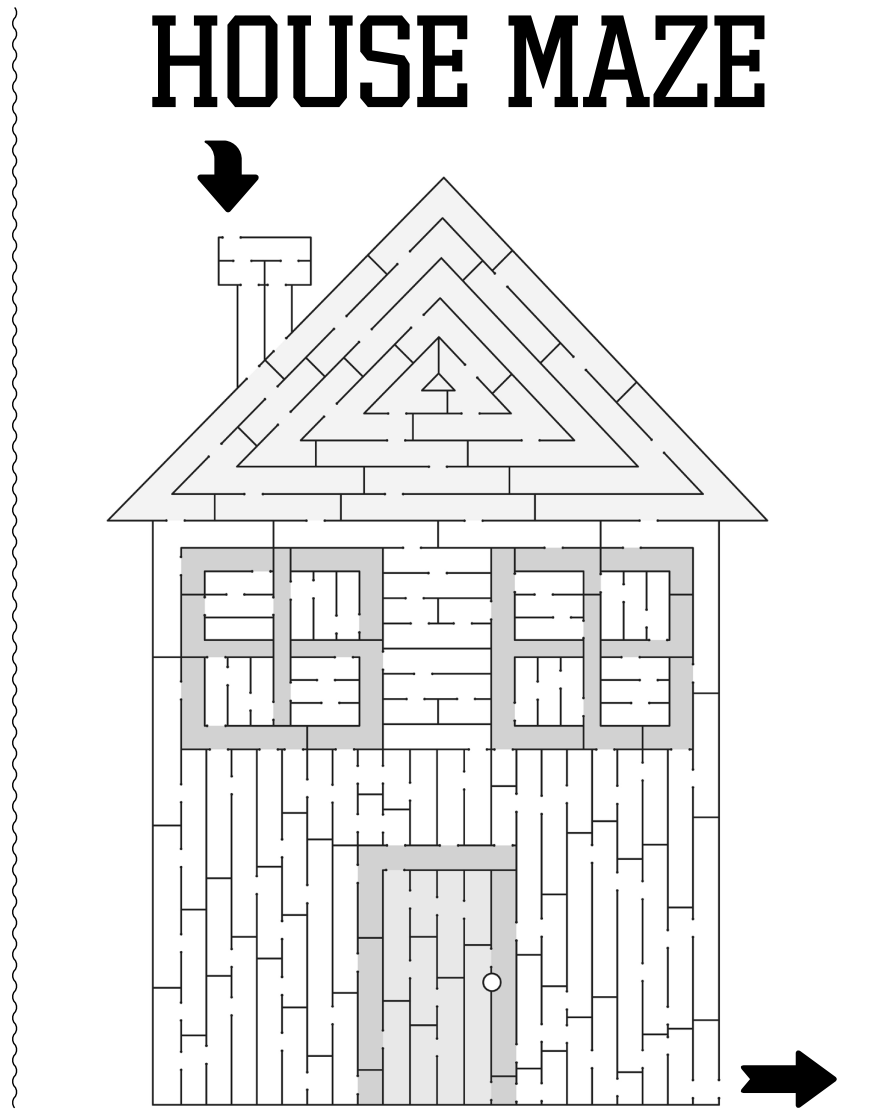
The work of the Atlas Home Construction Company, and the monumental work of the Asheville American Legion Housing Corporation to help relieve Asheville’s post-World War II housing crisis, cannot be understated. Most all of the houses that both entities erected (over 300 houses built between 1946-1948), even the “temporary houses”, are still standing and occupied, and are now part of Asheville and Buncombe County’s historic housing stock, even after almost 85 years! ☐

Note: I have a list of a number of these American Legion houses that still remain—if you suspect your house may be one, contact PSABC.

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